

Mayor's Message

November 2008

When was the last time you took the opportunity to ride on a roller coaster? When I take my grandchildren to Lagoon and they beg to ride the Colossus, I know I am in for a thrill. The cars make the slow, determined climb to the top, then when the pinnacle is reached, what a rush to drop down and loop around. It reminds me a bit of the state of our economy. We have enjoyed several years where jobs and housing were climbing upward and growing at a very nice pace, then suddenly we find ourselves dropping and experiencing the unsettled stomach that comes with uncertainty for the future. I imagine that each of us review our personal investments now and get that same feeling.

I thought this would be a good time to discuss our City and some of the steps we are taking as we ride the roller coaster economy. We are fortunate to have a well balanced tax system on a local level that consists of sales tax revenue, fees and property tax revenue. The money collected from these sources provides the daily services we each expect, including Police and Fire service, maintained roads, recreation programs, and parks, to name a few. We are a City with many established businesses who contribute greatly to making the revenues for these programs possible. With a downturn in the economy, we have seen less sales tax being generated. We are concerned about these businesses and hope you will continue to support them as you can. The question becomes: "How are we as City leaders translating this information to our City budget?"

In reviewing economic indicators, we began the budget year in July with the assumption of no new growth. We have had some small variations to date in the sales tax returns, but are anticipating more downturns as the economy works to start moving again. In meeting with each of the departments of the City, recommendations have been made by each to trim expenditures. With their cooperation, we have trimmed over a million dollars from our General Fund. I have put a hiring freeze in place and all departments are limiting travel. We are also putting additional policies in place to reduce our fuel consumption. We are evaluating our planned road projects and will consider how to proceed in January at our mid-year budget reviews.

While we all feel that we are riding a fast train through a downward loop, I am optimistic about the future. I believe that before long we will be back making that slow but determined climb to the top. I wish each of you the best as you work through your individual challenges on the daily roller coaster of life.